(SHRI B. K. GADHVI): (a) to (c) During the months of August, September and October, 1986, 24 cases of bank dacoities/robberies were reported by the public sector banks. A total amount of Rs. 51.35 lakhs was reported to have been looted and 11 persons were killed in these cases. To the extent the information is available, 14 persons have reportedly been arrested in connection with these cases.

(d) With a view to improving their security arrangements, banks have taken steps for appointment of armed security guards, installation of appropriate alarm systems etc. in vulnerable branches depending on the risk factor involved. Provision of wire-mesh cash cabins for cashiers, installation of collapsible steel gates in branches etc. are some of other measures, which have been implemented for improving the security of branches in a phased manner.

Merger of sales tax with excise duty

1987. SHRI KALPNATH RAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to merge sales tax with excise duty in respect of certain items; and

(b) if so, whether any decision has since been taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EXPENDITURE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI B. K. GADHVI): (a) and (b) In terms of a resolution adopted in the Chief Ministers' Conference on sales tax held on 13-2-1981 an Expert Committee was set up to study the financial implications of the extension of the scheme of Additional Excise Duty in lieu of sales tax on Vanaspati, Drugs and Medicines, Cement, Paper and paper Board and Petroleum products and the manner in which the financial interests of the States could be safeguarded. The recommendations of the Committee headed by Shri Kamlapati Tripathi, then M.P. were considered by another Chief Ministers' Conference held on 2-11-83. In that Conference some of the Chief Ministers indicated that they were not in a position to accept the recommendations. They expressed the view that the replacement of sales tax by additional excise duty will affect the powers of the States and erode their revenues and resource position. The other States did not oppose the scheme. Many of them indicated their acceptance of the recommendations with or without reservations. At the end of the Conference a resolution was adopted to the effect that efforts should be continued to bring about consensus among State Governments on the issue. Efforts made so far have not been successful.

Handloom Silk Industry

1988. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the handloom silk industry is in peril in several parts of the country and especially in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh; and

(b) if so, what type of long-term measures/are being taken by Government for the revival of the handloom silk industry in the country?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) However, the silk handloom industry all over the country is sought to be protected by the recently issued orders reserving certain silk items like Dhoties, Sarees, Lungies and engavastrams containing more than 25 per cent pure silk by weight for exclusive production by Handlooms. Earlier, reservation order, prior to 31st March, 1986, covered only items